DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 381 103 HE 028 241

AUTHOR	Escueta, Eugenia; O'Brien, Eileen
TITLE	Asian Americans in Higher Education: Trends and Issues.
INSTITUTION	American Council on Education, Washington, D.C. Div. of Policy Analysis and Research.
PUB DATE	91
NOTE	14p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Publications, American Council on Education, One Dupont Circle, N.W., Washington, DC 20036 (single copy, $10; annual subscription, $58; 10 percent member discount).
PUB TYPE	Collected Works - Serials (022) -- Statistical Data (110)
JOURNAL CIT	Research Briefs; v2 n4 1991
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Asian Americans; *Attendance; College Faculty; College Students; *Degrees (Academic); Educational Attainment; Educational Trends; *Enrollment Trends; Ethnic Groups; Graduation; *Higher Education; Population Trends; Tables (Data); Tenure; *Trend Analysis
IDENTIFIERS	*Asian American Students

ABSTRACT

This research brief reviews trends in Asian-American population and higher education participation. It determines the status of Asian-American students and faculty compared with other ethnic groups and identifies issues and problems connected with Asian Americans in academe. Data specifically include: composition of the Asian American population, educational attainment of Asian Americans, preparation for college, enrollment trends, degrees conferred and fields of study, doctoral program participation, Asian American faculty and staff in higher education, and tenure status and tenure rates for faculty by gender and race/ethnicity. Highlights of the data include: (1) only 22 percent of the Hmong population and 43 percent of Cambodians finished high school, compared with more than 80 percent of Asian Indian, Japanese, Indonesian, and Pakistani individuals; (2) representation of Asian Americans in higher education grew from two percent in 1976 to four percent in 1988; (3) most Asian-American students attend public institutions; and (4) from 1979 to 1989 the number of bachelor's degrees conferred to Asian Americans more than doubled and the number of master's degrees earned by Asian Americans nearly doubled. Contains 10 end notes, information about 3 data resources, and 15 references. (JDD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 381 103

RESEARCH BRIEFS Volume 2, Number 4 • 1991

Division of Policy Analysis and Research
American Council on Education, Washington, D.C.

Asian Americans In Higher Education: Trends and Issues

Eugenia Escueta and Eileen O'Brien

HE 028 241

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Div of Policy Analysis & Research, American Council on Education
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☑ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

RESEARCH BRIEFS Volume 2, Number 4 • 1991

Division of Policy Analysis and Research
American Council on Education, Washington, D.C.

Asian Americans In Higher Education: Trends and Issues

Eugenia Escueta and Eileen O'Brien

Asian and Pacific Islander Americans[1] are now the country's fastest growing racial/ethnic group. Just as the Asian-American population has doubled in size over the past two decades, so has its representation in college enrollments. The media has labeled Asian students in America as "the model minority," yet research indicates that this stereotype has hidden the academic difficulties faced by many Asian Americans — particularly members of certain groups.

In this research brief, we will review trends in both population and higher education, and their implications for the Asian-American population. We will determine the status of Asian-American students and faculty compared with other ethnic groups and identify the issues and problems connected with Asian Americans in academe. Finally, we will examine how this group's participation has changed and affected overall trends in higher education.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The Asian-American population in the United States has reached almost 7.3 million, according to the 1990 Census, and Asian Americans now represent almost 3 percent of the total U.S. population.
- The Census Bureau also found that in 1990, 80 percent of the Asian population 25 years and older were high school graduates — very close to the 81 percent rate recorded for whites.
- However, Asian ethnic groups showed significantly different high school completion rates in the 1980 Census: only 22 percent of the Hmong population and 43 percent of Cambodians finished high school, compared with more than 80 percent of Asian Indian, Japanese, Indonesian and Pakistani individuals.
- Census data show increasingly higher levels of college participation for Asian Americans: in 1980, 33 percent of Asian Americans aged 25 and above had at least four years of college. By 1990, the proportion rose to 40 percent, almost double the figure for whites (23 percent).
- The number of Asian Americans enrolled in all higher education institutions rose from 198,000 in 1976 to 497,000 in 1988. Asian-American women, whose enrollment doubled during this period, contributed significantly to this increase. The overall representation of Asian Americans in higher education grew from 2 percent in 1976 to 4 percent in 1988.
- Most Asian-American students (82 percent) attend public institutions, and almost half of these (39 percent) were enrolled in public, two-year colleges in 1988.
- From 1979 to 1989, the number of bachelor's degrees conferred to Asian Americans more than doubled (from 15,400 to 38,200), and the number of master's degrees earned by Asian Americans nearly doubled (from 5,500 to 10,700).
- Overall, Asian Americans earn a high proportion of their degrees in business and the sciences,

Eugenia Escueta was formerly a research assistant at the American Council on Education (ACE) and Eileen O'Brien is a research analyst at ACE.

and compared with all students, earn a much smaller number of degrees in the humanities and the social sciences. However, these trends are not as marked for Asian-American women.

- Of all ethnic and racial groups, including whites, Asian Americans recorded the biggest increase (46 percent) in the number of Ph.D.s earned between 1979 and 1989. This gain coincided with a doubling of the number of doctorates earned by Asians who are not U.S. citizens.
- Almost 5 percent of all full-time faculty in U.S. colleges and universities are Asian, and 40 percent of Asian faculty are foreign nationals.
- Only 41 percent of Asian faculty are tenured; more than 30 percent are in non-tenure track positions.
- One out of 100 executive and managerial positions in higher education is held by an Asian American.

IMPLICATIONS

While much has been made of the success of Asians in U.S. higher education, combining more than 28 different Asian and Pacific Island groups into the single category "Asian American" has caused the educational needs of specific groups to be masked by the group's overall academic achievement. Although Asian Americans appear to be overrepresented in higher education, some groups are underrepresented.

The quality and quantity of data on Asian Americans is diminished by research categorizations that provide racial and ethnic breakdowns using only three or four groups: white, African American, Hispanic and "other." Researchers need to design studies and data-gathering strategies that provide basic information on Asian Americans and information on racial and ethnic subgroups — not just for Asian Americans, but for all minority groups.

Results of standardized tests show that the verbal skills of Asian-American students (as a group) are underdeveloped. This may narrow their career options, and hence, influence their choice of degree fields and programs. Colleges and universities need to improve language skills assessment for Asian-American students, and should also study whether academic advisors need to encourage Asian Americans to pursue a wider variety of fields.

Colleges and universities should examine their tenure and promotion practices to determine the causes for the low tenure rate of Asian faculty, their concentration in non-tenure track positions, and their underrepresentation among higher education administrators.

INTRODUCTION

Most research on Asian Americans in higher education has focused on the achievement and status of the entire group, yet the population known as "Asian and Pacific Islander American" is extremely diverse. Individuals from 28 countries of origin identified themselves as members of the Asian American/Pacific Islander category of the 1980 Census. Asian groups vary widely according to educational attainment, average income levels, cultural origins, and year of entry into the United States.

Because data is rarely collected or disaggregated by Asian ethnic group or by citizenship or generation (whether individuals are first, second, third, etc. generation in the U.S.), the diversity within the Asian-American population typically is not recognized. This brief will focus primarily on the educational experiences of Asians who are U.S. citizens, and will provide as much specific Asian ethnic group information as possible.

Table 1
U.S. Population Estimates, 1980 and 1990

Race/Ethnicity	1980		1990	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total U.S. Population	**227,757,000**	**100.0**	**248,709,873**	**100.0**
White	195,571,000	85.9	199,686,070	80.3
African American	26,903,000	11.8	29,986,060	12.1
Asian/Pacific Islander	3,834,000	1.7	7,273,662	2.9
American Indian	1,420,400	0.6	1,959,234	0.9
Hispanic Origin*	14,608,673	6.4	22,354,059	9.0

* Persons of Hispanic origin can be of any race.

Note: The 1990 figures are subject to possible correction for undercount or overcount and have not been statistically adjusted to account for persons who identified themselves as "other race."

Source: Census Bureau, Preliminary Population Estimates, unpublished data, 1991.

DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

- The Asian-American population in the United States reached almost 7.3 million, according to data released from the 1990 Census.[2] Asian Americans now represent 2.9 percent of the total U.S. population, and this has more than doubled from the 3.5 million individuals who identified themselves as Asian or Pacific Island Americans just ten years ago in the 1980 Census (table 1).

- In 1980 and 1990, the six largest Asian groups were from China, the Philippines, Japan, India, Korea and Vietnam (figure 1). However, some of these groups grew more rapidly than others during the 1980s; Asian Indian, Korean, and Vietnamese populations more than doubled, while the Japanese population increased by 20 percent.

- The Population Reference Bureau projects that by the year 2000, the Asian-American population could reach almost 11 million and comprise almost 4 percent of the total U.S. population.[3]

Immigration

- Increased immigration from Asian countries accounted for a sizable portion of the growth in the Asian-American population; in the 1980s, almost 2.9 million new Asian immigrants came to the United States.[4] Vietnamese, Cambodian, Hmong and Laotian refugees and immigrants accounted for a significant portion of this growth.

- In 1980, 59 percent of the Asian-American population was born in foreign countries, compared with 6 percent of the total U.S. population.

Age

Because of the youthfulness of the overall Asian-American population and the tendency of many Asian Americans to invest heavily in postsecondary education, the increase in the Asian-American population has and will continue to greatly impact higher education.

- The median age of Asians in the 1980 census was 28.4 years, compared with an overall median age of 30.0 for the nation. The Japanese represent the eldest group, with a median age of 33.5 years. At the opposite end, the median age for the Vietnamese population is 21.5 years.

Educational Attainment

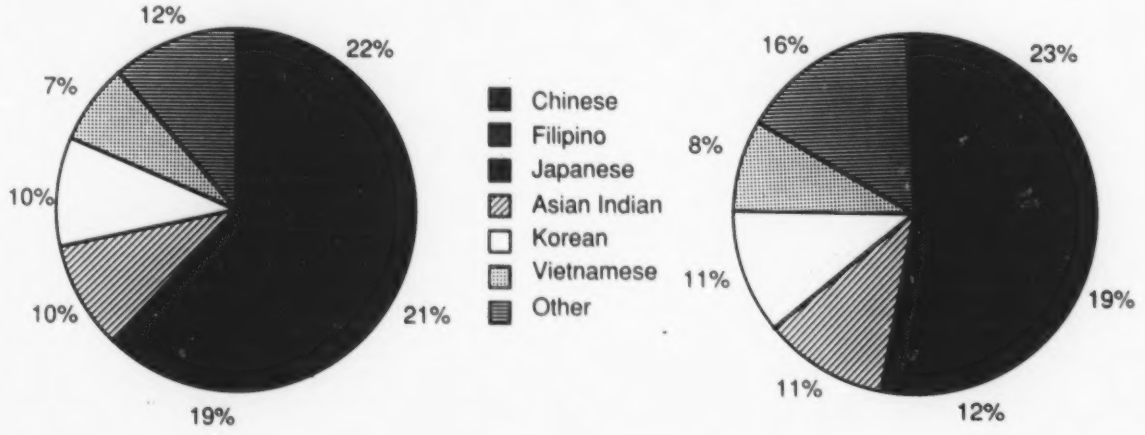
As a group, Asian Americans have reached high educational levels, yet the diversity within the Asian-American population is manifested in its varied educational attainment levels.

- In 1990, 80 percent of Asian Americans who were 25 years and older were high school graduates—equal to the 81 percent rate recorded for whites (O'Hare and Felt, 1991).

- The 1990 Current Population Survey (CPS) indicated high college attendance levels for Asian Americans (O'Hare and Felt, 1991). Forty percent of Asian Americans aged 25 and above had at least four years of college, almost double the figure for whites (23 percent).

Figure 1

Composition of Asian American Population, 1980 and 1990



Note: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.
Source: Census Bureau, Preliminary Population Estimates, unpublished data, 1991.

The Decennial Census is the best source for educational data on Asian-American subgroups; yet, this data will not be available from the 1990 Census until 1992. This leads us to rely primarily on 1980 data for subgroup analysis, which shows educational attainment levels varied widely among different Asian groups.

- For example, in 1980, only 22 percent of the Hmong population above 25 years of age had a high school diploma or equivalent, and only 3 percent had four or more years of college. Similarly, 43 percent of Cambodians finished high school, and 8 percent had four or more years of college.

- Yet more than 80 percent of Asian Indian, Japanese, Indonesian and Pakistani individuals completed high school. More than one-quarter of Japanese and Indonesian adults and more than one-half of Asian Indian and Pakistani adults attended four or more years of college.

Asian American high school graduation rates differed somewhat based on gender, according to the 1980 Census.

- While 79 percent of Asian-American men graduated from high school, only 71 percent of Asian-American women did.

- These differences were even more striking within certain subgroups. Nine out of ten Korean men completed high school, compared with seven out of ten women, and Vietnamese males were much more likely to finish high school (71 percent) than were Vietnamese women (54 percent).

- Although Asian Americans as a group have the lowest high school dropout rate of any racial and ethnic group (including whites), there is growing evidence that dropout rates of Southeast Asian refugee students are increasing at an alarming pace (Hsia, 1988). A summary report from the Boston Public Schools showed that the dropout rate had almost doubled from 14 percent in 1982 to 27 percent in 1985 for students from Southeast Asia.[5]

ASIAN AMERICANS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Preparation for College

In a study of 1988 eighth graders, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) found that Asian Americans had higher educational aspirations than their non-Asian peers.[6]

- Thirty-seven percent of Asian-American eighth graders planned to take a college preparatory high school program, compared with 29 percent of all students.

Table 2
SAT Scores and High School GPAs of University of California Freshmen, 1984

Students' Ethnicity	High School GPA	SAT, Verbal	SAT, Mathematics
White	3.59	512	577
All Asian American	3.69	456	584
Chinese	3.73	473	612
Filipino	3.56	448	520
Indian/Pakistani	3.80	520	606
Japanese	3.75	510	604
Korean	3.64	418	594
Other Asian Americans	3.72	373	556

Note: The Scholastic Aptitude Test is scored on a scale of 200 to 800 for each of the two sections, and the grade point averages are reported based on a 4.0 scale.

Source: The College Board, *Predictors of Academic Achievement Among Asian American and White Students*, 1988.

- Almost forty percent of Asian-American eighth graders expected to finish college and attend graduate school, compared with all students, 43 percent of whom expected to finish college, and 23 percent of whom expected to attend graduate school.

- The Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) Mathematics scores of Asian Americans are normally above the national average.[7] In 1990, the national average was 476, while Asian Americans scored an average of 528 (College Board, 1990).

- However, Asian Americans consistently have had below-average verbal SAT scores — their 1990 average score of 410 contrasts with the national average of 424.

An analysis of 1984 University of California freshmen (Sue and Abe, 1988) showed important differences in SAT scores and high school grade point averages among different Asian groups (table 2).

- Of the six Asian groups studied, only Filipino students had lower high school GPAs than the white students; Chinese, Indian/Pakistani, Japanese, Korean, and students in the "other" Asian American group had higher GPAs than white students.

- Only Indian/Pakistani students had higher SAT verbal scores than white students. Asian students in the "other" category had the lowest average score, 373, almost 140 points lower than the average score for white students.

- However, most Asian groups had significantly higher marks than white students on the math section of the SAT. Only Filipinos and "other" Asian Americans scored below that of white students, while Chinese students scored the highest.

The lower scores Asian Americans earn on the verbal sections of the SAT and other standardized tests can be correlated with the large number who speak English as a second language.

- In 1985, 27 percent of Asian-American college-bound high school seniors reported English was not their best language, compared with only 4 percent of all college-bound seniors (Ramist and Arbeiter, 1986).

Enrollment Trends

- Asian-American enrollment in higher education is increasing dramatically. From 1976 to 1988, the number of Asian Americans enrolled in all higher education institutions increased twofold from 198,000 to 497,000, and their overall representation doubled from about 2 percent to 4 percent.

- During the same time period, data on Asian Americans also show comparable increases in undergraduate and graduate enrollments, while their enrollment in first professional programs more than tripled from 1976 to 1988.

- Between 1978 and 1988, the proportion of Asian-American women in higher education stayed the same — almost 50 percent of Asian undergraduates and slightly more than 40 percent of Asian graduate students (first professional women students did increase their numbers from 31 to 40 percent).

- However, the number of women students soared. At the undergraduate level, their numbers more than doubled; at the graduate level, their representation grew by 75 percent; and at the first professional level, their numbers almost quadrupled.

- With 82 percent of all Asian Americans enrolled in higher education attending public institutions in 1988, their enrollment in public colleges and universities is slightly above the national average of 78 percent.

- In 1988, 39 percent of all Asian-American college students were enrolled in public, two-year colleges. This proportion has remained stable since 1978.

- The 1980 Census showed some significant enrollment differences among Asian ethnic groups in the 20-24 age group: for example, Chinese Americans had the highest enrollment rate (60 percent), while Filipino Americans had the lowest (27 percent) of the six largest Asian groups.[8] This compared with an enrollment rate of 24 percent for whites and 21 percent for African Americans.

Degrees Conferred and Field of Study

Asian Americans' growth in the overall population has been matched by a comparable increase in their repre-sentation among those who earned college degrees (table 3). From 1979 to 1989, the number of bachelor's degrees conferred to Asian Americans more than doubled from 15,400 to 38,200, and the number of master's degrees they earned almost doubled, from 5,500 to 10,700 (figure 2).

- In 1979, Asian Americans accounted for 1.7 percent of all bachelor's degrees awarded. By 1989, Asian Americans had earned just under 4 percent of all conferred baccalaureates.

- During the same period, the proportion of Asian Americans earning master's degrees rose from 1.8 percent to 3.5 percent.

- Asian-American women's increases fueled this growth between 1979 and 1989: the number of women earning bachelor's degrees rose from 7,000 to almost 19,000, and the number earning master's degrees jumped from 2,000 to 4,000.

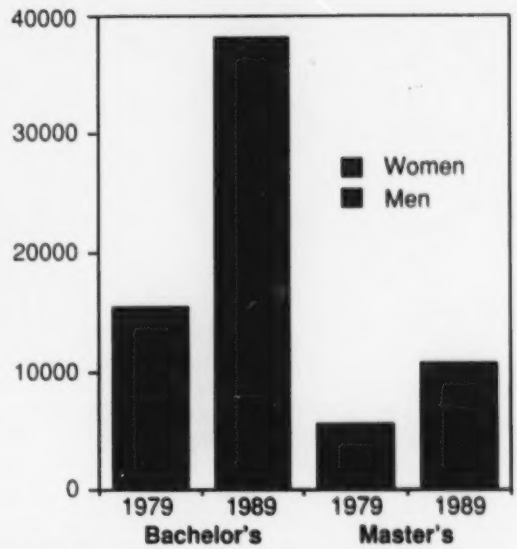
The stereotype of Asian Americans might suggest that they pursue degrees in science-based fields, such as engineering or physical sciences, and to some extent this

Table 3
Degrees Conferred to Asian-American and All Students, 1979 and 1989

Degree	1979	1989	Percentage Increase
Bachelor's			
Total	919,540	1,015,239	11%
Asian American	15,407	38,219	148%
Master's			
Total	300,255	308,872	3%
Asian American	5,496	10,714	95%
Doctorate's			
Total	31,239	34,319	10%
Asian American	428	624	46%

Sources: National Center for Education Statistics, "Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS)," unpublished tabulations, 1990, and National Research Council, *Summary Report 1989: Doctorate Recipients from United States Universities*, 1990.

Figure 2
Bachelor's and Master's Degrees Earned by Asian Americans, 1979 and 1989



Sources: National Center for Education Statistics, "Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS)," unpublished tabulations, 1990.

is true. However, similar to trends for students overall, Asian Americans earn the highest number of their bachelor's and master's degrees in business. In addition, the preference for careers in science-based fields does not extend to Asian-American women.

- In 1989, the top three broad subject fields in which Asian Americans earned their bachelor's degrees were business, engineering, and social sciences, also the top three fields for all students. At the master's level, Asian Americans' top three field choices also paralleled those of all students: business, engineering and education.

- Asian Americans are less likely than white and other ethnic minority students to pursue degrees in education. Education degrees represented 10 percent of bachelor's earned by all students, yet only 3 percent of Asian Americans earned education degrees in 1989. At the master's level, education degrees accounted for 27 percent of degrees awarded to all students, but only 10 percent of those conferred to Asian Americans.

Engineering is a very popular field for Asian Americans — it ranks second in both bachelor's and master's degrees awarded to Asians in 1989. However, when broken down by gender, the data reveal a different pattern:

- More than 25 percent of all bachelor's and master's degrees conferred to Asian-American men were earned in engineering.

- Engineering accounted for only 6 percent and 7 percent, respectively, of the bachelor's and master's degrees earned by Asian-American women.

Differences in choice of field also were displayed among the top three degree fields for Asian-American men and women.

- At the bachelor's level, engineering, business and social sciences were the top fields for men, while business, social sciences and life sciences were the top choices for women.

- At the master's level, Asian-American women's top fields were business, education and the health professions, compared with men's choices of business, engineering and computer sciences.

- Recent baccalaureate trends indicate that Asian Americans, especially women, may be diversifying, moving away from physical sciences and computer science, and branching out into social sciences, psychology and health professions. Although the primary field for Asian-American men may remain engineering, there are signs that they, too, are earning degrees in a greater variety of fields.

- If current trends continue, it appears that the popularity of master's degrees in business among Asian-American men and women will continue to grow, as will the choice of education master's degrees.

Doctorate Production

Data from the National Research Council (NRC, 1990) indicate that the increases Asian Americans have shown at the doctoral level have not been as impressive as their gains at the bachelor's and master's level. In addition, the number of doctorates earned by Asians studying under permanent and temporary visas has far surpassed the number of Ph.D.s awarded to Asian U.S. citizens during the past ten years.

- From 1979 to 1989, the number of Asian Americans (U.S. citizens only) earning doctorates each year rose from 428 to 624, a 46 percent increase. This compares with an overall increase of 10 percent for all Ph.D.s.

- This was the biggest increase in earned doctorates of any ethnic group from 1979 to 1989. The number of African Americans and whites earning Ph.D.s actually declined by 23 percent and 6 percent, respectively, while Hispanics and American Indians increased their number of doctorates by 23 percent and 15 percent, respectively.

- Asian-American doctorates increased their proportion of all Ph.D.s earned by U.S. citizens from 1.7 percent in 1979 to 2.7 percent in 1989.

- However, the number of Asian doctorates who were not U.S. citizens more than doubled during that same time (from 2,137 to 4,508), and their proportion of doctorates awarded to all Asians increased to 88 percent in 1989.

- Three-fourths of Asian doctorates were temporary residents, representing a steady increase of nearly 1.5 percent per year since 1978.

- NRC data indicate that Asian women still lag behind Asian men with respect to Ph.D. numbers. Women accounted for only 29 percent of the Asian Ph.D.s who were U.S. citizens (women represented 43 percent of all doctorates earned by U.S. citizens). In addition, only 18 percent of the Asian doctorate recipients on temporary and permanent visas were women.

- Almost 70 percent of the doctorates awarded to Asian Americans were in the areas of engineering, life sciences and physical sciences, yet less than half of all doctorates was awarded in these fields. Asian Americans earned the least number of Ph.D.s in professional fields and the humanities.

NRC data show a trend away from employment in academe and toward employment in industry for Asian-American doctorates.

- In 1973, 45 percent of Asian-American doctorates reported employment commitments to academe, compared with only 39 percent in 1989; similarly, the proportion of whites with Ph.D.s who planned to work in academe dropped from 64 percent in 1973 to 52 percent in 1989.

- A larger proportion of Asian Americans had commitments to enter industry jobs: 41 percent in 1973 and 46 percent in 1989. This compares with an increase from 12 percent to 20 percent for white doctorates committed to industry work.

Faculty and Staff in Higher Education

Preliminary analyses might indicate that the proportion of Asian Americans employed by higher education is equal to the overall population proportion; however, Asian-American women have not reached parity with the overall population, and a high percentage of Asian faculty are in non-tenure track positions.

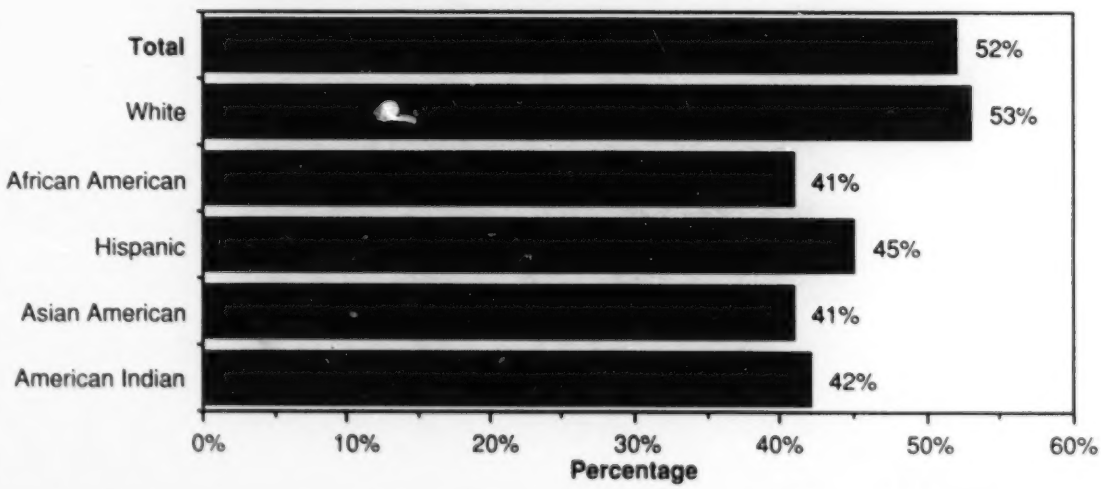
- Most reports on the composition of full-time faculty in U.S. colleges and universities show that between 4 and 5 percent are Asian American (EEOC, 1991; NCES, 1990).

- According to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), 24,252 of a total of 514,662 full-time faculty were Asian American in 1989.

- This represents a considerable growth from 1975, when Asian faculty totaled 9,763, or 2 percent, of all full-time faculty.[9]

- In 1989, EEOC data indicate that 40 percent of Asian faculty were foreign nationals (not U.S. citizens). Most Asian foreign nationals (81 percent) are male.

Figure 3
Faculty Tenure Rates by Race/Ethnicity, 1989



Source: Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, *1989 EEO-6 Detail Summary Report*, U.S. Summary, unpublished data, 1991.

- Although men outnumber women among all faculty (70 percent vs. 30 percent), Asian-American men are even more disproportionately represented among faculty (78 percent vs. 22 percent).

With respect to tenure, the EEOC data[10] indicate Asian faculty have not reached parity with other groups (figures 3 and 4).

- Looking at all full-time faculty (including those not on a tenure track), Asian faculty have one of the lowest tenure rates of all minority groups: 41 percent (African American faculty also have a rate of 41 percent). The overall tenure rate is 52 percent.

- Women faculty overall have lower tenure rates than men (38 percent compared with 58 percent), and Asian Americans are no exception — 31 percent of Asian-American women and 44 percent of Asian-American men are tenured.

- As with other minority groups, a large segment of the Asian faculty is found in non-tenure track positions; three out of every ten Asian faculty members are in non-tenure track positions (table 4).

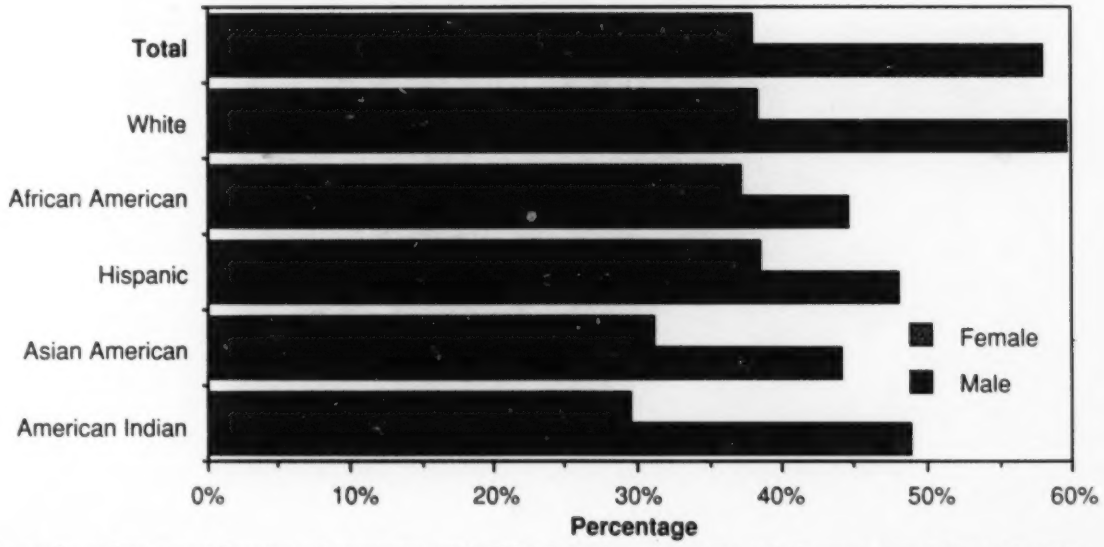
- The EEOC survey also indicates that as of 1989 only 1 out of 100 executive or managerial positions in higher education administration were filled by Asian Americans.

Table 4
Tenure Status of Full-Time Faculty, by Race/Ethnicity, 1989

Race/ Ethnic Group	Tenure Track		Non-Tenure Track
	Tenured	Not Tenured	
All	52%	21%	27%
Asian American	41	28	31
White	53	21	26
African American	41	26	33
Hispanic	45	25	30
American Indian	42	21	37

Source: Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Higher Education Staff Survey, *1989 EEO-6 Detail Summary Report*. Unpublished data, 1991.

Figure 4
Tenure Rates for Faculty, by Gender, 1989



Source: Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, *1989 EEO-6 Detail Summary Report*, U.S. Summary, unpublished data, 1991.

IMPLICATIONS

The aggregation of more than 28 different Asian and Pacific Island groups into the single category "Asian American" has led to educational needs and problems of the subgroups being masked by the overall academic achievement record of Asian Americans. As a group, Asian Americans appear to be slightly overrepresented in higher education, even though some groups are underrepresented.

Compounding the problem of aggregating data on Asian Americans are research categorizations that provide racial and ethnic breakdowns using only three or four groups: white, black, Hispanic, and "other," which may include Asian Americans, American Indians and non-U.S. citizens. To indicate that the U.S. population consists only of three ethnic groups ignores the nation's diversity and diminishes the quality and quantity of data on all minority groups.

Researchers and policymakers need to design studies and data gathering strategies that provide basic information on Asian Americans and provide information on subgroups — not just for Asian Americans, but for all minority groups. This may require oversampling, but the paucity of basic data on all subgroups warrants it.

With the Census Bureau now including Asian Americans in the Current Population Surveys, and considering oversampling to provide a better dataset, more information will be available. Also, when detailed racial and ethnic information on education and income from the 1990 Census are released in 1992, the data will provide a rich, comprehensive source for new research. A careful analysis of the differences among Asian-American subgroups, rather than a simple study of the trends of the overall group, is warranted.

Since immigration from Asian and Pacific Island countries is projected to increase, research comparing recent immigrants to second- and third-generation Asian-American students and faculty is essential (currently, such research is practically nonexistent). Some scholars say that there are important differences in the educational achievement levels of these groups, and Census data support their assertion: the Hmong and Cambodian populations, two groups with high percentages of immigrants, have extremely low high school completion rates. As the number of Asian immigrants entering the nation's educational system grows, educators need more research to understand the particular educational strengths and needs of the Asian students from various ethnic groups.

Research shows that the underdevelopment of verbal skills of certain Asian ethnic groups persists, and may influence their choice of degree fields and programs. Colleges and universities should assess the needs of Asian Americans and recent Asian immigrants with respect to developing verbal and language skills. Institutions might also study whether academic advisors can ensure that Asian Americans' choices of major fields of study are not overly influenced by any perceived language barriers, and encourage Asian students to pursue a wider variety of fields.

Overall, Asian Americans have recorded impressive gains in enrollment and earned degrees at all levels over the last decade. However, at the doctorate level, women continue to earn a significantly smaller number of Ph.D.s than men, and this may correlate with the smaller proportion of Asian women faculty. Research on why fewer Asian-American women than men are earning doctoral degrees and becoming faculty members is recommended. In addition, because Asians who are not U.S. citizens far outnumber Asian Americans in terms of earned Ph.D.s, research on the experience of Asian doctorates who study under temporary or permanent visas might offer important insight into these trends.

Although the number of Asian faculty has grown, these faculty have not achieved the same tenure rates as other groups. Colleges and universities should examine their tenure and promotion practices to determine the causes for the low tenure rates of Asian faculty, their concentration in non-tenure track positions, and their vast underrepresentation among higher education administrators.

Recently, many Asian Americans in higher education, both students and faculty, have formed new organizations and coalitions to increase awareness and address issues that are of immediate importance to Asian Americans. By collaborating with these groups, institutions could develop ways to improve the campus climate for Asian Americans.

How higher education responds to these concerns will greatly affect the perceptions and progress of Asian Americans in the future. Our primary recommendation is for educators to recognize that there are differences among Asian-American groups, and to seek out undetected but damaging weaknesses in a record that may seem laudatory overall.

ENDNOTES

[1] In this brief, the phrase "Asian Americans" refers to U.S. citizens who trace their ancestry to South Asia, Southeast Asia, East Asia, and the Pacific Islands. This term does not include non-U.S. citizens or foreign nationals.

[2] The Census Bureau does not distinguish between Asians who are U.S. citizens and Asians who are foreign nationals.

[3] Conversation with Judy Felt, Research Demographer, Population Reference Bureau.

[4] Based on data in *Asian Americans: America's Fastest Growing Minority Group*, 1991, (Washington, D.C.: Population Reference Bureau), 2.

[5] Study cited in Hsia, Jayjia, *Asian Americans in Higher Education and at Work*, 1988, (Lawrence Erlbaum Assoc.: Hillsdale, N.J.), 57.

[6] U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988: A Profile of the American Eighth Grader*, 1990, pp. 66 and 71.

[7] The College Board combines foreign Asian students' scores with Asian-American students' scores in the category of "Asian American."

[8] Most enrollment data on Asian ethnic groups comes from the Decennial Census; the Education Department does not provide subgroup breakdowns. This information is based on 1980 Census data cited in *Asian Americans: Growth, Change and Diversity*, 1985, (Washington, D.C.: Population Reference Bureau), 27.

[9] EEOC data as reported in *Seventh Annual Status Report on Minorities in Higher Education*, 1988, (Washington, D.C.: Office of Minorities in Higher Education, American Council on Education), pp. 32-35.

[10] Some reviewers pointed out limitations to EEOC data: 1) Although EEOC recently began collecting data on faculty who are foreign nationals, only counts are available. Tenure rates and faculty ranks are not disaggregated by foreign national status, and therefor all data on rank and tenure also include foreign nationals. 2) EEOC does not collect information on faculty by field of study. Data on both of these variables might show interactions such as lower tenure rates for Asian foreign nationals or Asian faculty members' concentration in certain fields.

RESOURCES

1. Data from the Census Bureau's Decennial Census provides the most comprehensive national statistics on Asians and Asian ethnic groups living in the United States. However, statistics on racial and ethnic groups covering such areas as education, place of birth, citizenship, labor force participation, income, etc., will not be available from the Racial Statistics Division until 1992. The division is planning to update the 1988 publication, *We, the Asian and Pacific Islander Americans*, which offers a statistical snapshot of the U.S. Asian population based on the 1980 Census. The expected publication date is 1993. For more information, contact the Racial Statistics Division, U.S. Bureau of the Census, Washington, D.C. 20233, (301) 763-7572.
2. The November/December 1989 issue of *Change* magazine, published by the American Association for Higher Education, was devoted to Asian and Pacific Americans. Edited by Paula Bagasao and Bob H. Suzuki, the issue features articles on the "model minority" stereotype, demographics of Asian Americans, student activism, admissions quotas, affirmative action, and other areas. Many of the articles are based on anecdotal information, but the magazine provides a comprehensive look at the issues facing Asian Americans in higher education. A limited number of copies are available for $7.50 from Heldref Publications, *Change* Magazine, 1319 18th Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20036.
3. Another comprehensive view of Asian-American issues, also written by Bob H. Suzuki, appears as a chapter in the 1989 Jossey-Bass Inc. publication, edited by Arthur Levine, *Shaping Higher Education's Future: Demographic Realities and Opportunities, 1990-2000*. The chapter, titled "Asian Americans in Higher Education: Impact of Changing Demographics and Other Social Forces," provides a historical review of Asian immigration, as well as a thorough examination of the socioeconomic status and educational trends of Asian Americans. The book is available for $23.95 from Jossey-Bass Inc., 350 Sansome Street, San Francisco, CA 94104.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

The College Board. *College Bound Seniors: 1990 Profile of SAT and Achievement Test Takers*. New York: The College Board, 1990.

Robert Gardner, Bryant Robey, and Peter Smith. *Asian Americans: Growth, Change and Diversity. Population Bulletin*. Washington, D.C.: Population Reference Bureau, 1985.

Jayjia Hsia. *Asian Americans in Higher Education and at Work*. Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Assoc., 1988.

Institute of International Education. *Open Doors, 1989-90: Report on International Educational Exchange*. New York: Institute of International Education, 1990.

National Research Council, Office of Scientific and Engineering Personnel. *Summary Report 1989: Doctorate Recipients from United States Universities*. Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press., 1990.

William P. O'Hare and Judy Felt. *Asian Americans: America's Fastest Growing Minority Group*. Washington, D.C.: Population Reference Bureau, 1991.

Leonard Ramist and Solomon Arbeiter. *Profiles, College-Bound Seniors, 1985*. New York: College Entrance Examination Board, 1986.

Stanley Sue and Jennifer Abe. *Predictors of Academic Achievement Among Asian American and White Students*. New York: College Entrance Examination Board, 1988.

U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. *We, the Asian and Pacific Islander Americans*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1988.

_____. *Preliminary Population Estimates*, unpublished tabulations, 1991.

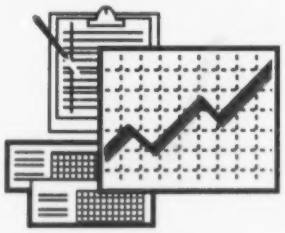
U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. *Digest of Education Statistics, 1990* Report No. NCES 89-643. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1990.

_____. "Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS)," unpublished tabulations, 1990.

_____. *National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988: A Profile of the American Eighth Grader*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1990.

U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Higher Education Staff. 1989 EEO-6 Detail Summary Report, U.S. Summary. Unpublished data, 1991.

Reginald Wilson and Deborah Carter. *Seventh Annual Status Report on Minorities in Higher Education*. Washington, D.C.: Office of Minorities in Higher Education, American Council on Education, 1988.



THE ACE RESEARCH BRIEF SERIES

The Division of Policy Analysis and Research at the American Council on Education publishes the ACE Research Brief Series, a collection of short papers exploring timely and pertinent issues in higher education. Current topics include trends in retention data and practices, academic collective bargaining, and international comparisons of higher education expenditures and participation. The series is published eight times a year and is available for $55 for one year, $100 for two years, or $140 for three years. ACE members receive a 10 percent discount.

The **1990 Research Brief Series** also examined important topics, and copies of the following issues are still available:

- No. 1—Faculty Salaries in Perspective $7
- No. 2—Students Who Work: A Profile $7
- No. 3—Racial and Ethnic Trends in College Participation: 1976 to1988 $7
- No. 4—Community and Junior Colleges: A Recent Profile $7
- No. 5—College Graduates in the Labor Market: Today and the Future $7
- No. 6—A Decade of Change: The Status of U.S. Women Doctorates, 1978-1988 $7
- No. 7—Enrollment by Age: Distinguishing the Numbers from the Rates $7
- No. 8—Campuses and Student Assessment $7
- Complete 1990 Series $50

To order, make checks payable to: American Council on Education
All orders must be prepaid. No purchase orders accepted.
Mail to: 1991 Research Briefs, American Council on Education,
One Dupont Circle NW, Washington, D.C. 20036.
(202) 939-9450.

Elaine El-Khawas, Vice President,
Policy Analysis and Research

Cecilia Ottinger, Editor,
Research Brief Series

American Council on Education
Executive Committee, 1991

Robert L. Albright, President, Johnson C. Smith University, *Chair*
Hoke L. Smith, President, Towson State University, *Vice Chair*
Stanley O. Ikenberry, President, University of Illinois, *Immediate Past Chair*
Marilyn Schlack, President, Kalamazoo Valley Community College, *Secretary*
D. Bruce Johnstone, Chancellor, State University of New York
Johnnetta B. Cole, President, Spelman College
Thomas Gonzales, Chancellor, Seattle Community College
Robert H. Atwell, American Council on Education, *President*